

else has he written that the administration refuses to release to the full Senate? The Members of this body will never know until the administration ends the obstruction and provides access to each and every one of the memos on drones that Professor Barron has written. Again, the administration should comply with the Second Circuit's order requiring them to make the opinion of the Office of Legal Counsel public, even if it is with redactions.

Why the rush to have this vote before the public gets to read the legal reasoning? Why is the other side so afraid of waiting to vote until their constituents read this nominee's legal rationale for the targeted killing of American citizens?

It is time for the White House and the administration to stop playing games regarding how many of the professor's memos there are. It is time for the White House to stop hiding from the public the materials they have been ordered by the court to disclose.

I will vote against this nominee and urge my colleagues to do the same.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCHATZ). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, under the order I ask unanimous consent for 20 minutes to address the Senate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

BENGHAZI

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I rise to urge Senator REID to say a very clear no to the request by 37 Republicans that we create a new Senate select committee on Benghazi. I was astounded to see 37 Republicans—many of whom have worked on this issue with me and Senator MENENDEZ on the Foreign Relations Committee—essentially make this request at a time when we have so much information already on Benghazi. To spend the funds for this separate committee—in addition to the one the House has set up—doesn't make sense unless you believe, as I do, that this is all a political witch hunt.

The attacks of September 11, 2012, in Benghazi that took the lives of four Americans, including Ambassador Chris Stevens, were a tragedy. After such a tragedy, we should all come together and make certain that this never happens again, but we should not play politics. Instead of focusing and agreeing on how we can prevent future attacks against U.S. personnel overseas—as they have had an opportunity to do by adding more funding for diplomatic posts to protect our people—the Republicans want to turn the Benghazi-Libya tragedy into a scandal.

That is scandalous. The way they are handling this issue is a scandal.

The American people are smart. I have seen recent polls, and they get it. More than 60 percent—and I will look that up again—say this is all about politics; it is not about anything else.

I wish to explain to the American people what we have done about this tragedy. Over the last 20 months, these attacks have received unprecedented scrutiny. I have a chart I wish to share that explains it.

We have had nine House and Senate investigations on Benghazi. We have conducted 17 hearings. We have held 50–5–0—briefings. We have conducted 25 interviews, issued 8 subpoenas, and reviewed 25,000 pages of documents. There are 25,000 pages of documents that have been reviewed. We have had six reports released. All of these little boxes represented here show the various hearings, the various committees, the various briefings, the various documents. We look at this chart and realize this is unprecedented.

Nine different House and Senate committees have investigated the attacks. Seventeen hearings have been conducted. Fifty briefings have taken place. Twenty-five transcribed interviews have been conducted. Eight subpoenas have been issued. More than 25,000 pages of documents have been reviewed, and 6 congressional reports have been released.

I have gone over this a couple of times this morning because I want to make sure the RECORD reflects all of this accurately.

In case that is not enough to convince the people of this country what a witch hunt the Republicans are on, I will show my colleagues a partial viewing of the materials, if my colleagues will excuse me while I bend down. That is just one stack of binders. All of these binders are filled—filled—with all of the information that came out of these reports.

So before people get up here and say, Oh, we need more information, how about reading what we already have: stacks and stacks of information.

Within these binders are the reports and the testimony Congress has already heard over the last 20 months, but my Republican friends would have us believe none of this happened and none of what the chart depicts happened. They are not satisfied with exhaustive reviews, much of which was conducted by House Republican committee Chairs, by the way. They walk away from their own work because they are playing politics. They should be proud of the work they did, but this isn't about the work they did. It is about playing politics. It is about hurting people—hurting people.

Benghazi was a tragedy. We lost four beautiful, patriotic Americans. Don't turn it into a scandal.

I guess these filled binders were not enough for them in the House of Representatives.

I will take these down now.

This wasn't enough for them: 9 committees, 17 hearings, 50 briefings, 25 interviews, 8 subpoenas, 25,000 pages of documents, 6 reports. All of this was not enough for them. The House set up a new select committee and, again, 37 of my Republican friends now want their own select committee. That is right; they want two new committees to investigate what has been investigated, investigated, and investigated.

A person doesn't need a degree in political science to know what a political witch hunt looks like. All a person needs to do is to look at this and a person understands. This is a campaign tactic by my Republican colleagues to gin up their base ahead of the midterm election and, by the way, look ahead to 2016, where they are filled with anxiety at the thought that the former Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, may be the Democratic nominee.

This is a campaign tactic, this call for these committees. We know Republicans have been actively fundraising off this tragedy. That is right; they have been fundraising off this tragedy. When Speaker BOEHNER was asked about it, all he did was walk away from the question. I watched that interview. It was painful.

They said: Aren't you going to stop the fundraising?

He said: We are just interested in the facts.

They said: Aren't you going to stop this fundraising?

He said: We are just interested in the facts.

Answer the question. We know it is a political witch hunt because before he was minding his Ps and Qs, the House Select Committee chairman suggested the administration should be put on "trial" over Benghazi—put on trial.

We also know the House GOP refused House minority leader NANCY PELOSI's offer to put an equal number of Democrats and Republicans on the panel. Oh, no, because it is a political witch hunt and they want total control over that committee.

Here is one issue I know the select committee won't be investigating in the House, and that is the budget cuts House Republicans made to security at our embassies and at our consulates, at our diplomatic posts around the world—cuts that Republicans actually boasted about making. Here in the Senate, we have tried to get through an embassy security bill by unanimous consent and they objected I don't know how many times—a couple of times.

So we are not going to see an investigation into why the Republicans thought it was wise to cut spending on embassy security. Oh, no, they won't look at that. One Congressman in the House was asked by CNN whether the GOP cut embassy security, because the reporter was incredulous, and this Congressman said: Absolutely. Look, we have to make priorities and choices. You have to prioritize things. So, clearly, this particular Member of Congress was proud they cut embassy security; but, believe me, they are not

going to be investigating that in their investigative committee.

I will tell my colleagues what else they are not going to investigate. They are not going to investigate the tragedy and the scandal of more than 4,000 Americans killed in the Iraq war based on phony intelligence—4,000 Americans dead, based on phony intelligence. I never heard one call for a select committee to find out why that happened. And that ignores the tens of thousands of wounded, some with post-traumatic stress, and all the problems we know are happening.

Here is something else they won't tell us. Between 1998 and 2013, there were at least 501 significant attacks against U.S. diplomatic facilities and personnel in 70 countries, resulting in the deaths of 586 people, including 67 Americans. During the Bush administration, there were 166 attacks which killed 116 people, including 18 Americans. All of these attacks were terrible tragedies, but not one of them was exploited for political gain. Why would we exploit a tragedy where an American got killed for political gain? We could have done it.

I was serving in the House back in 1983. I know that is probably close to when the Presiding Officer was born. I was serving in the House in 1983 when a truck bomb exploded outside the Marine barracks in Beirut, Lebanon, killing 241 American servicemembers. The attack came just 6 months after 17 Americans were killed in the bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut. Let me tell my colleagues about how that was handled by then-Speaker Tip O'Neill when Ronald Reagan was President. Tip O'Neill conducted real oversight with the two parties working closely together. Within 2 months, the House stepped forward—Democrats and Republicans—and produced a report that criticized the lax security around the barracks and called for new measures to keep our brave military men and women safe. That is the way we should handle these things, not a kangaroo court, not a political witch hunt, not a partisan investigation.

Let's face it. This is politics. They are about discrediting the Obama administration and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. I repeat: Never in history, to my knowledge—and I have gone back and back—has any political party done what they are doing on Benghazi.

There is disinformation. They say: Well, the President kept saying it was because of the movie that was produced. The President stepped forward and in his first comment said the attacks were acts of terror. That is his quote. We never hear that from the Republicans. He called them acts of terror.

I will tell my colleagues what else they forget to mention: that Secretary Clinton was the first person to convene an independent investigation of the attacks. Let me reiterate. The very first person to convene an independent in-

vestigation of the attacks in Benghazi was Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

The independent investigation was nonpartisan. It was called an investigation by the Accountability Review Board. It was chaired by Ambassador Thomas Pickering and Admiral Michael Mullen. Talk about a nonpartisan team. I can attest to the fact they are nonpartisan. I am privileged to sit on the Foreign Relations Committee. I am the most senior member on that committee. I will tell my colleagues these two gentlemen came forward and delivered their report. They talked very openly and honestly about the systemic problems that undermined security in Benghazi. And guess what happened after that report. Secretary Clinton and the State Department quickly accepted all 29 of those recommendations and put them into place—first under Secretary Clinton and now Secretary Kerry.

So let me say this again. There is this call for this political witch hunt because they want to hurt Hillary Clinton, and Hillary Clinton was the first person to convene an independent investigation that made 29 recommendations that she started to put in place, and Secretary Kerry is completing that task. Unbelievable. But we won't hear that from our Republican friends. They want to make Benghazi into a scandal, but they are the scandal. That is the scandal: playing politics with a tragedy. That is the scandal.

The Senate Intelligence Committee produced a bipartisan report based on dozens of committee hearings, briefings, and interviews—that is in here as well—that highlighted the need to better respond to security threats against our diplomatic posts and personnel around the world.

Instead of going over all of these reports—I showed my colleagues how many there are, and this chart demonstrates that as well in a very clear way how many investigations that have been conducted—instead of focusing on protecting Americans serving abroad by carrying out the recommendations of these reports, my colleagues are obsessing over talking points prepared for a Sunday TV show.

There is nothing in the thousands of documents released that even remotely suggests an attempt to cover up what happened in Benghazi. As I said, the President said they were acts of terror. Hillary Clinton launched the investigation. The investigation made 29 recommendations.

This new select committee request is a sham. It is a kangaroo court. It is a waste of taxpayer dollars. If Senate Republicans really wanted to help protect the men and women who bravely serve our country overseas, they would stop objecting to our request to take up our bipartisan embassy security bill.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee passed S. 1386. It is named after Chris Stevens, Sean Smith, Tyrone Woods, and Glen Doherty. It is called the Chris Stevens, Sean Smith, Tyrone

Woods, and Glen Doherty Embassy Security Threat Mitigation and Personnel Protection Act.

It was passed and reported in December of last year. It was authored by Senators MENENDEZ and CORKER. I thank them for that. This bill will authorize funding for key measures recommended by the Accountability Review Board, including security upgrades at our embassies, consulates, and other diplomatic posts, especially high-risk posts. It also authorizes new funding for security training, including language training for high-threat security environments. It would direct the Secretary of State to expand the Marine Corps security guard detachment program to help protect our diplomatic facilities and personnel.

Why do the Republicans keep objecting to this bill? You cannot, with a straight face, tell me you truly care about our foreign personnel when you stand in the way of S. 1386, a bill to provide for enhanced security, a bill that is bipartisan, a bill that came out of the committee on which I serve, Foreign Relations.

I hope other colleagues will come down and talk about this sham. We have so much to do. We need to grieve for the families, the deaths of four Americans. Their loss is deep, very deep. To turn that into some investigation, some witch hunt, is not the right thing to do for their memories. The right thing to do for their memories is to pass this embassy security bill.

I do not know how to say it, but it does cost money to make upgrades to your home, to your buildings. We are here in the Capitol, we protect and upgrade these beautiful buildings because of their history. We have to upgrade our buildings. That does not come free. It does cost money.

Yet House Republicans were bragging that they cut embassy security. So I am going to talk about this a lot because I care so deeply about making sure our personnel are safe all over the world. Until they allow this bill to go through, I truly question the deep concerns that are being expressed by my Republican friends. Oh, they need yet another committee to get to the bottom of Benghazi.

We know what happened. It was a terror attack on a facility that needed more protection. OK? How do we make sure that does not happen again? We have had more than 500 attacks—significant attacks—on our facilities since 1998, between 1998 and 2013 over 500 attacks.

Never has anyone of any party tried to play politics with it. The reason I am so, shall we say, upset with this is because it is the wrong way to move forward. People look at us and they wonder if we can get anything done. I am so proud. I have a very important water resources bill coming up. We worked so well together across the aisle. We did a highway bill. We worked so well across the aisle. Why don't we do what we did when Tip O'Neill was

Speaker and work well across the aisle on foreign policy? When I was coming up, foreign policy basically stopped at the water's edge. We respected the President, whoever it may be, Republican or Democrat.

If we had a critique, we expressed it, but we did it in a way that was, if I can just say, less partisan. I will leave you with the image of this chart. This chart says it all. We have investigated this. We have looked at it. We have conducted hearings and briefings and interviews and issued subpoenas and reviewed documents and issued reports.

We do not need to spend money on another committee because someone is afraid of Hillary Clinton's candidacy. Just deal with it. Do not try to revise history. She was the first person to convene an independent investigation to begin to put the pieces into play that would in fact make sure this did not happen again.

Don't say you care about embassy security when you stand and oppose a bipartisan bill that would make sure we make the requisite improvements to our facilities? I hope HARRY REID, our leader, will not say yes to a committee that is nothing but a political witch hunt. I will continue to come down to the floor to discuss this issue, to debate this issue if it is necessary to do so.

I yield the floor and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

MR. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE ECONOMY

MR. THUNE. Mr. President, there were two polls that were released this week, one from Gallup and one from Politico. Both polls asked Americans what concerns them the most. Both polls got the same answer: the economy, jobs, and health care.

That response is not too surprising. Unemployment is high. In fact, there are 3½ million Americans who have been unemployed for 6 months or longer. Last month more than 800,000 Americans gave up hope of finding work and dropped out of the labor force entirely. The economy barely grew at all last quarter—one-tenth of 1 percent.

Household income is down by \$3,500 since the President took office. Some 6.7 million Americans have fallen into poverty since 2008. Meanwhile, the price of everything from gas to college to health care keeps going up. It is no wonder Americans list jobs and the economy as two of the issues that concern them the most.

It is not surprising that the other top concern of Americans is health care, because over the past 4 years the President and his team have taken an im-

perfect health care system and made it much worse. Thanks to ObamaCare, millions of Americans have lost their health care plans, plans which in many cases they liked and wanted to keep.

Many of the 8 million exchange signups the President likes to brag about were actually people who were forced into the exchanges after their health care plans were canceled. In fact, according to a recent McKinsey survey, only one-quarter of the people who signed up on the exchanges were previously uninsured. In addition to losing their plans, millions of Americans have also seen their costs increase.

Family health insurance premiums, which the President claimed would fall by \$2,500 under his health care law, have actually risen by \$3,671, and they are still going up, no end in sight. I would like to read just a few of the headlines from last week. This is from the Fiscal Times. It says, "Big Increases in ObamaCare Premiums and Deductibles Coming in November;" from Forbes, "First ObamaCare Premium Notices for 2015 Show Double Digit Increases;" from the Los Angeles Times, "Employer health costs to rise nearly 9% this year, survey finds;" from Investors Business Daily, "ObamaCare Deductibles to Rise to \$6,600 by 2015;" from the Associated Press, "Cost-Control Plan for Health Care Could Cost You."

There are more, but we get the idea. Prices are not on their way down; they are in fact on their way up. Then of course there is the President's "if you like your doctor, you'll be able to keep your doctor" promise. As too many Americans have found out, that was another promise destined to be broken. Over the past 4 years, Americans have not only discovered that in many cases they will no longer be able to see the doctors they have been seeing for years, they have also discovered their choice of a replacement is limited.

The New York Times reported last week:

In the midst of all of the turmoil in health care these days, one thing is becoming clear. No matter what kind of health plan consumers choose, they will find fewer doctors and hospitals in their network or pay much more for the privilege of going to any provider they want.

That is from the New York Times. One quote in that article struck me particularly. It was something Marcus Merz, the CEO of Minnesota insurer PreferredOne, told the Times. This is what he said:

We have to break people away from the choice habit that everyone has. . . . We're all trying to break away from this fixation on open access and broad networks.

Let me repeat that to get the full context of what he is saying. We have to break people away from the choice habit that everyone has. Is this what we wanted out of health care reform? Was that not one of the good things about our health care system, the fact that people are able to, by and large,

go to the doctor they chose; that people could look around for the best doctor in a particular field or find a doctor who they felt comfortable with?

Do we really want a health care future where Americans don't have a choice about the doctor they see?

Limited choice doesn't just mean that Americans might not be able to find a doctor they like. It also means that Americans may not be able to go to a doctor they need.

A Daily Caller article from last week noted:

Cancer centers, with their top-of-the-line physicians and expensive procedures, have been a primary casualty of narrow networks. According to an Associated Press analysis, just four of the top 19 comprehensive cancer centers are covered by all Obamacare exchange plans in their states.

Four of the top 19 cancer centers in the country—that is not what you want from of a health insurance plan if you have cancer.

Given the President's broken promises and the havoc that ObamaCare is wreaking on our health care system, it is no surprise that 83 percent of those Politico surveyed want to modify or repeal the law entirely or that health care was the most frequently cited reason for a negative experience with the government over the past year or that nearly 90 percent of respondents say that ObamaCare will be important in determining how they vote this fall.

There is a lot more that could be said about ObamaCare, such as the damage it is doing to our economy.

VETERANS AFFAIRS

I want to move on to talk about another, very serious instance of government mismanagement—what is going on in the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Almost every day a new report surfaces of mistreatment or mismanagement at VA facilities across the country. At least 40 veterans have reportedly died because of delayed or inadequate care.

It is now clear that this is not an isolated problem at a few select locations but a system-wide crisis, and it is a national embarrassment.

Our contract with our servicemen and women is a sacred trust. They pledge their lives in the service of our country and take upon themselves the burden of defending liberty for the rest of us. In return, we promised them benefits, including health care and a college education.

Our men and women in uniform uphold their end of the contract, sometimes at the cost of their own lives. For us to fail to uphold ours is a disgrace and a betrayal of their sacrifice.

Every resource of this administration should be focused on discovering the full scope of this problem and immediately starting to fix it. Yet this administration has shown a startling lack of concern about the widespread mistreatment of veterans in our country.

When it became clear that his health care Web site was a disaster, the President employed an "all hands on deck"